

Towards a Poetics: An Analysis of Alfred Kubin's Die andere Seite

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IN 1908, ALFRED KUBIN published *Die andere Seite* (*The Other Side*). According to a letter from Kubin's friend, Maximilian Dauthendey, the novel is a "maize of splendid uncanniness" (Raabe 32), and, as if to underscore Dauthendey's statement, the author Stefan Zweig immediately acclaimed it to be "far-reaching and fascinating in the dreams evoked" (Raabe 15). Zweig's statement is not at all surprising since Kubin (1877-1959) chose to live in the land of dreams. Throughout his long life he searched that realm to establish the borderline between dream and reality. He never succeeded. What he did discover was that distinctions between dreamland and the conscious world are false distinctions, devised by logicians who were either unable or unwilling to acknowledge and accept all human experiences as equally valid.

In thousands of drawings and in his prose, Kubin introduced the no-man's-land between the conscious and the subconscious, between the visible and the invisible, between waking and dreaming. He sought to make incredible beings and things live according to credible laws. He not only believed that everything that exists finds its form in its very possibility, but he also believed that if the existing is to appear and materialize, it must meet its resemblance in visible thought. He was aware of the gap between an object as experienced in nature and the image of that same object as conveyed through his art; and he utilized that gap to force into consciousness an awareness of a reality that was ever-changing and illusive. Reality, to Kubin, was always in the act of becoming: revealing and concealing itself in different ways in different times. As a doubly gifted artist, he wrote to convey his perception of reality; he drew to portray those same perceptions visually. Nowhere is his verbal and visual talent as obvious as in *Die andere Seite*.

Although many critics have analyzed the novel, these analyses have focused on psychological (Müller-Thalheim), social-historical (Lippuner), literary (Schroeder), textual (Hewig), and aesthetic aspects of the work. Each critique is valid, yet limited. For *Die andere Seite* fuses ideas and techniques from numerous sources, and can be most clearly understood in the context of Kubin's life and his intellectual development. It is here that the biographical, philosophical, and aesthetic facets of his life mesh, and as one unravels the factors that led to the creation of the novel, the complexity of the book is more clearly understood. This essay makes no claim to be exhaustive, but it introduces the reader to the richness of Kubin's major literary text by focusing upon his purpose for writing, by analysing the text, and by suggesting his indebtedness to other verbal and visual artists.

In the fall of 1908, refreshed from a journey to northern Italy, Kubin returned to his home, Zwickledt, eager to resume drawing. Yet, according to his autobiography (xxxvii), when he attempted to draw, it was impossible for him to produce a single coherent line. The flow of images he had gathered in Italy was too powerful to reproduce in pictorial form. Frustrated by his artistic impotence, he nonetheless realized that he had to clarify his ideas and focus his amorphous images if he wished to conquer his artistic impasse. Rather surprisingly he turned to prose as a vehicle for self-purgation and self-discovery. He had an admitted distaste for writing, but he knew intuitively that only through the symbolic use of language would he be forced to grapple with his ideas. Although verbal expression was essentially foreign to him at this time, the sequential order and interrelationship of ideas demanded by prose forced him to think through both the form that his mental images should take and the philosophical frame in which they should be set. This search for artistic discovery led him to begin the composition of *Die andere Seite*.

The novel, begun as an adventure story, rapidly seized control of its author. In his autobiography, Kubin described the twelve weeks spent composing the novel, and the additional month devoted to illustrating it, as weeks in which he was whipped on day and night by some inexplicable, compulsive urge (xxxvii). The story itself has a simple plot line. A thirty-year old graphic artist receives an invitation from a former schoolfriend, Claus Patera, to visit him in Perle, the capital of the so-called Dream Kingdom. The Kingdom is isolated from and unknown to the civilized world and has been artificially created by Patera from buildings he transported from Europe. The artist and his wife travel deep into central Asia and find in Perle a city that is disarmingly familiar. Perle is a city of the past in which time

has stopped. Everything within the city predates 1860. Patera, the master, creator, and ruler of the Dream Kingdom, remains mysteriously inaccessible to the narrator as he and his wife attempt to understand a series of disturbing events. As the story moves forward, it becomes clear that the Kingdom is inevitably doomed to decomposition and putrefaction, both from within and without. An American, the canned-beef king Hercules Bell, has come to Perle to overthrow Patera and open the Kingdom to commerce and industry. As the tension between the forces of the past and those of the future increases, the city and its inhabitants physically and psychically disintegrate. The story ends with a cosmic cataclysm that totally destroys the Dream Kingdom. Patera dies. Bell escapes. The artist survives to tell his story.

The external structure of the novel mirrors its internal movement as the reader is carried deeper and deeper into the realm of the dream, the "other side" of reality. Through the narrative action, it becomes clear that the reader is witnessing the symbolic journey of a mind into the depth of its subconsciousness. The narrator's quest for a new conception of the nature of the world parallels Kubin's personal search for the meaning of creative imagination, but more specifically he allows the reader to experience precisely how the creative imagination functions as it contends with the hallucinatory and illusory qualities of the subconscious mind. The novel is divided into three parts, each corresponding to stages of wakefulness and sleep. In the first division of the novel the narrator is invited to the Dream Kingdom; and as in the initial moments of the time between waking and sleep, the narrator drifts in and out of measured clock time and day-to-day materiality. In the second, the major portion of the book, the narrator is totally immersed in the land of dream where the laws of logic are no longer applicable. This is the domain of psychic images that are unknown to the rationality of the waking consciousness. In the third and final section of the narrative, the collapse of the Dream Kingdom is related in a series of graphic-verbal tableaux. The narrator's experience of these tableaux allows him to return to the conscious world, metamorphosed in thought and capable of retaining subconscious images in his conscious mind.

To begin at the beginning: the title of the novel, *Die andere Seite*, invites the reader to participate in something dissociated from the norm, outside of the ordinary. This anticipation of the unexpected is heightened on the novel's first page. With a few technical aspects of storytelling, Kubin signals the reader of the method he plans to employ in order to explore, develop, and convey the meaning of his

novel. The story is a first-person account, recorded in retrospect by an unnamed "illustrator-designer" of "an advanced age"; and according to the author the action of that story will involve "strange phenomena of the imagination," that can only be explained by "ingenious psychologists" (11). It becomes increasingly clear as the story unfolds that Kubin has chosen his narrative perspective to underscore his own perception of the nature of dream. He has selected for a narrator an illustrator who by definition is both sensitive to and observant of his environment; and he has allowed his "eyewitness" the freedom to create scenes that he "could not possibly have witnessed"—scenes that have crept "imperceptibly" into the story. By selecting a self who is more insightful than any ordinary man, Kubin has cued the reader not to expect either the narrator or the events he relates to coincide with the average person's concept of daily life. Kubin does not elaborate in any detail upon his narrator's personality, nor does he set him in any specified social-historical framework. His primary purpose is to serve as a means to an end rather than as an end in himself. He functions as a point of reference—a contact with the common sense understanding of reality—in order for the reader's attention to be pointedly and credibly focused on the bizarre and grotesque events he relates. The world he describes lies far beyond the mundane world of common experience, and Kubin keeps his characteristics vague enough so that the reader willingly launches his or her imagination into the narrator's related observations. At the same time, the reader must be thoroughly convinced of the narrator's integrity so that the validity of these experiences is never doubted. To give his character this kind of dual function, Kubin binds him to the disparate and commonplace concerns of everyday life—his marriage, his job—while simultaneously freeing him to observe the manifold colors of a human world that lies beyond—on "the other side" of—the range of ordinary experience. He thus becomes the measure by which the change and growth of the ideas that Kubin wishes to convey are evaluated.

Kubin, either by conscious choice or by artistic intuition, utilizes a uniform style to convey his unambiguous message. His selection of a first-person narrator allows him to shut out conflicting views and narrows the range of possible interpretations to a single unified one. In addition, he gains an illusion of verisimilitude, since the one voice—meticulously allied to the reader's world—requires no adjustments to either language or viewpoint. Almost by definition, all actions, analyses, and speeches—regardless of their reality or surreality—are perceived by the reader as equally objective, for they are

recorded through the voice of the single narrator. Kubin's second major problem involved the pacing of the novel's action. Again, use of a first-person narrator allows him to employ certain stylistic liberties. He divides his passages between scene and summary, using scene to evoke reader participation in those events that demand a sense of immediacy, and then he draws back to summarize and provide background for those events that are less intense. Throughout his narration, Kubin had to maintain a level of *vraisemblance* while simultaneously introducing a measure of the mysterious or inexplicable. Without this duality, he could not hope to entice his reader into his fictional realm. He could not settle for a willing suspension of disbelief, for the level of interpretation he sought demanded the acceptance of dream as an essential and inseparable part of reality.

Throughout the novel, it is the dream itself that Kubin wishes to emphasize rather than the narration of a particular dream's content. Kubin knew that if he succeeded in divorcing the reader from the specific content of his narrative and led him or her to concentrate upon the course of the narrative's events, he would provide a key to his own art. In general, dreams are pictorial in content, a visual experience that occurs in the mind's eye. Each image exists—often unrelated to any other—and always without intellectual integration into a single relationship and meaning. The integration only occurs in the waking mind when the dream is called into consciousness. If this same principle be applied to Kubin's novel, then the details of the novel become relevant not in and of themselves but rather as the means of conveying an image that in its entirety contains the novel's meaning.

The central image of *Die andere Seite* is a dream. The novel's movement progresses from consciousness to sleep, to the experience of the dream, through the dissolution of the dream, to a return to consciousness. Of the thirteen sections of the book, the first six portray the early dream state. It is twilight when the narrator receives the invitation to come to the Dream Kingdom; and as the narrator succumbs to the lure of the dream, his contact with material reality gradually gives way to the imaginative world of dream. As in a dream, the realm he enters contains a sequence of visual experiences unlike those that can be photographed or observed by the physical eye. Before entering the Dream Kingdom, he has to relinquish his binoculars and his camera, a concrete signal that underscores the unstated fact that what he is about to experience only exists in the mind and, unlike physical reality, cannot be perceived or recorded by any means other than the mind. The world of waking reality is

abandoned as he begins his dream, and his imagination is liberated from the domination of the conscious intellect. It is in this stage of the dream that he observes the daily life of the Dream Kingdom, unencumbered by the laws of logic that rule the conscious world.

Throughout Parts I and II of the novel, everything is seen in black and gray, often in dimness and shadow, as if to emphasize the absence of clarity that can only exist in the ordered world of the conscious mind. Here, everything must be experienced and accepted, nothing is to be selected and arranged by an investigative intellect. The narrator's actions and the actions of the other inhabitants of the Kingdom remain unclear, clouded like the land itself where the sun never shines and the stars and moon are never visible. His mind remains dulled as he seeks to unravel the mysterious people and actions he encounters. In this section of the novel, he is not so fully immersed in dream that his conscious mind relinquishes its striving for a sense of permanence and meaning. Only gradually does he become "so accustomed to the improbable that nothing seemed out of the ordinary" (56). He learns to accept the transitoriness of everything. "Illusions simply were reality" (60). He eventually perceives that the other people he encounters are acting out their dreams to the exclusion of all others and that their way is the only way to survive within the Kingdom. He attains this awareness painfully, and it is only after his wife's death that he begins to understand that he must follow his "inner voice," succumb to his dream, and begin to act out his role as a creative artist. Immediately following her death, he thinks about his wife constantly, sees his life as meaningless, and contemplates suicide. He finally realizes that "hers was a healthy, realistic nature that could never strike roots in this phantom kingdom" (123). Once free of her memory, he severs his final connection with the world of reality and becomes a total citizen of the Dream Kingdom. To live out his dream, he follows the dictates of an overwhelming desire to draw. He works intensely and is able to produce "under pressure of sorrow" (122) his finest drawings.

It is at this point in the narrative that the dreamer is psychologically so immersed in dream that he can, conversely, begin the slow and lengthy process of the dream's deterioration and his eventual return to reality. This turn in action occurs in the pivotal seventh section of the book. Counting the epilogue, the novel contains six sections that deal with the entry into and exposition of the dream and six sections that describe the dream's dissolution and the protagonist's awakening. The seventh section, mathematically between the two major divisions, breaks the narration to explain "how everything

fitted together" (130). In this moment the protagonist knows the meaning of equilibrium, life's balance and rhythm. He knows that this balance can only be discovered through an opening of the mind to the powers of an imagination that demands "everything at once, the thing and its opposite" (131). This realization of the innumerable forces that interact and oscillate in the world brings him an understanding of the nature of the world. He knows that in order to comprehend the world, he needs to understand and partake of both dream and reality—"the thing and its opposite"; and he learns through this experience that to acknowledge only one facet of existence is to deny the swing of the pendulum that, after its farthest and most violent swings, returns to the center of balance. He felt the common bond between everything. "Colours, smells, sounds, and tastes became interchangeable" (150).

This revelation of the meaning of existence is immediately followed by a description of a bizarre and fantastic dream in which the narrator stands beside the edge of a river. Clocks with short stubby legs, fish caught out of the air, harmonica music played on a man's eighteen nipples, goose-stepping pigs that vanish into a mouse hole, trains dashing about in the miller's transparent entrails, a chimpanzee that plants a circular garden of asparagus-like stalks—are but a few of the dream's details. All are reported without comment, void of any personal involvement by the narrator. This switch in the narrator's point-of-view from the active protagonist, attempting to transform the dream images into some ordered sequence, to a passive protagonist, merely observing and describing dream images, is significant. From this point forward, the dream sequence is presented as a series of unrelated tableaux that can be read as verbal descriptions of visual phenomena, connected by the artist-narrator in much the same way that drawings in a gallery are related to each other by the technical or thematic approach employed by the artist. In this second major division of the novel, Kubin succeeds in blending the two aspects of his creative genius. He has his protagonist describe what he sees without any interpretive commentary. No matter how unreal the scene may be, the narrator remains removed from it and allows the reader to draw his or her own conclusions about its meaning. Unlike the nine divisions that comprise chapters three and four of the novel's first part, chapter three of the novel's second part contains twenty-one divisions. Of these twenty-one, each may be read as an independent dream vision, as one in a series of unrelated visual experiences. These verbal drawings combine the appearance of the external world of concrete reality with the psychic images that form

the core of a dream. As in a Kubin drawing, these two realms of reality are fused into one. The familiar is transformed into the strange and incomprehensible, while paradoxically, the bizarre and unknown are treated realistically.

The seventh section of the book makes clear the direction the narrative is to take. The artist-protagonist, on the river's edge, learns through his visionary dream that there is no need to apply the laws of logic to the illogical. On the contrary, the need is to recognize the validity of the illogical, to step back from the dictates of temporality and to submit to the energies of the subconscious and the atemporal. Kubin signals this shift through the varied stylistic devices previously noted and visually relates the same message in the illustration that accompanies the dream vision. This illustration, like the section itself, is also in the center of the novel. The text contains fifty-one illustrations, and this particular drawing is the twenty-sixth of the fifty-one. The first and last six chapters of the book each contain twenty-five illustrations. The drawing has all of the elements mentioned in the verbal description of the dream: the man fishing in the air, the clocks with legs, the flying fish, etc. One of the most intriguing aspects of the entire composition is the portrayal of the narrator himself. He is positioned in the lower right-hand corner of the drawing, dressed in top hat and cutaway, obviously distanced from the madness acted out before him. The three-quarter view of him is drawn in profile, and his assumed position is that of an observer in a gallery. He serves as the viewer's point of entry into the action depicted in the major portion of the picture plane and is the viewer's guide from temporal reality into the world of illusion. This fact is emphasized by the clocks strewn before the narrator like a bridge from his world into the dream. The drawing, like the dream it portrays, is what has since been termed surrealistic. Reality is transformed and intensified to give further insight into the true meaning of existence; and this intensification is formally conceptualized in the pictorial image. (See Fig. 1 on facing page.)

The dirt, mold, rot, rust, and decay that permeate the tableaux of the second part of the novel are in direct contrast to the cleanliness and order that had prevailed in the Dream Kingdom. As the dream disintegrates, both the physical and the moral, the outer and the inner, aspects of the dream world collapse. The afflictions of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse infest the city: buildings crumble; morality dies; vegetation disappears; animals invade; dread, hatred, and fear dominate all actions. The tenuous balance that had been sustained during Patera's rule of the Kingdom is rapidly destroyed by



Fig. 1 Twenty-sixth illustration from *Die andere Seite*. Reprinted by permission of Spangenberg, Munich.

the emergence of a new ruling force. Hercules Bell, the powerful American, uses his wealth and his energy to manipulate the dream people into a revolt against Patera and into a siege of self destruction. He asks the dreamers to be "beware of sleep" in a country of "fairyland splendor," ruled by "unreason" (146). He implores them to break the spell that Patera has cast and return to the world of reason. Bell, as the voice of progress, brings an accelerated rhythm of events to the dream life, and slowly destroys everything that the Dream Kingdom had represented. Under the domination of the new force of science, progress, and materialism that Bell embodies, the passivity of the dreamers and their obsolete ways cannot survive. "Time seemed to move at a different rate" (144).

To depict the deterioration of the dream, Kubin utilizes a panorama of scenes in which the laws of illogic are unchallenged. These scenes are shifted rapidly and are intentionally brief to quicken the narrative's pace and to convey a mood of unquestioned fantasy. The narrator's position as observer-reporter, which had been introduced in the pivotal seventh section of the novel's first part, is the established point of view in the second part of the book. Symbols and events, unrelated in subject, are fused to form a kind of collage that in itself conveys a meaning which can only be comprehended on a subconscious level. Particular images are shifted into a context in which they are not usually associated; and because of this displacement, the observer is forced to confront a reality that is in conflict with his presupposed understanding of that term. From this confrontation, he then begins to fathom the strange, inexplicable links that exist among all things within the mind. There is no longer a division; there is no "this side" as opposed to "the other." Meaning can only exist when the two blend into one. This meaning, gradually discovered by the narrator when he learns that Patera and Bell are polar aspects of the same force, is evoked in the reader by Kubin's creation of a surrealistic dream in which he shocks and astonishes; yet, paradoxically, Kubin makes the dream accessible through his separation of the narrator from the action and his firmly established identification of the narrator with the reader.

The verbal experiment that Kubin conducted in his writing of *Die andere Seite* resulted in his discovery of a poetics that served him well. Following the writing of the novel, he was not unlike his narrator who returned home safely from his journey into dreamland with a disquieting wisdom concerning the meaning of life and of art. He rejected the ordinary concept of reality as a "repulsive caricature" (234) of life's true meaning, for he was aware that life is a battle-

ground of opposing forces, constantly vying for domination. He recognized that the "double game" (236) has a continuation within each individual and that even if the mystery of the inexplicable remains unsolved, the fact of it does not. It is through the recognition of these things that the narrator is able to reenter the world of artistic activity and to develop a means of expressing his vision to his audience. In the Dream Kingdom he learned to blend the objective phenomena of the consciously perceived world with those of the subjective imagination; and he knew that only through the synthesis of these two seeming antitheses could true art be created. The artist must perceive both poles; yet once perceived, it is imperative that he bring his perceptions into balance and deny neither. Like the swing of the pendulum, the artist journeys to the outward limits of experience, but his created product results from the brief moment when, again like the pendulum, the balance between the two extremes is struck. The outer limits of consciousness (the artist's world prior to his entry into dream) as well as the extremities of the subconscious world (the dream visions) have to be explored; but they also have to be destroyed so that the world that blends the two will dominate.

By implication, the artist-protagonist of *Die andere Seite* found this sense of balance through his experience of the Dream Kingdom. The form and the philosophy that shape the novel and give it its meaning reflect the world view the protagonist developed in the Dream Kingdom between the ages of thirty and thirty-three. In this sense the novel is autobiographical, for Kubin also learned through the writing of *Die andere Seite* that the domain of his art lay between the psychic world of the subconscious and the conscious realization of that world's permeation into everyday life. From 1908 forward, the bizarre and grotesque features that dominated his earlier work were in no sense abandoned, but they were handled in a completely different manner. Instead of being the central and often threatening focus of a work, they became integral facets of familiar everyday scenes. In many ways the philosophical-artistic discovery he made through the composition of *Die andere Seite* marked a turning point in his art. From this date until his death, he consistently strove to establish the centrality of the imaginative powers of the subconscious in his portrayal of reality; and in his finest graphic art, he captured the point in time when the images of the waking world united with those of dream.

The writing of the novel was a private ritual for Kubin, a working out of the uncertainties with which he had struggled during the years prior to its composition. He did not plan to publish the book; in fact,

it was only after receiving encouragement from his friends and his brother-in-law, Oskar A. H. Schmitz, that he reluctantly allowed it to be printed. He needed to write in order to focus his inner vision. Up to this time he searched for a means of fusing idea and form. According to his autobiographical writings, he had experimented with diverse media and style, but he could not find a way to capture and convey his perception of the world. He knew that the illogical was a part of both extraordinary and commonplace happenings; yet he felt that his art conveyed a limited perception of reality and often resulted in being merely bizarre, shocking, or grotesque. He was dissatisfied, frustrated. Somehow he had to find a visual method of communicating his belief in the universality of a mysterious force that underlies and connects all levels of reality. The exercise in logic, stemming from his working out of the interrelationship between text and illustration, central to *Die andere Seite*, led to a clarification of his ideas. As late as 1944, in a letter to Herbert Lange, Kubin wrote that "*Die andere Seite* depicts both a sequence of experiences and a philosophy of life. . . . In a certain sense, I have obviously never escaped from it. . . . The years following the completion of the novel brought a degree of clarification but never a total resolution of the problems raised. For that reason, my visual art, if it is interpreted intellectually, can be seen to correspond to the vision of this remarkable book."

At the age of thirty, after years of experimentation, Kubin found a means of expressing his detachment from the purely representational or the purely imaginative in art. He was now able to combine his sense of the alien dream world with the "undeniably humorous parts of life." He learned to depict a world that combined the dream and the waking, the imagined and the tangible, the surreal and the real. Like the protagonist in *Die andere Seite*, he discovered that "The forces of attraction and repulsion, the poles of the earth with their currents, the alternation of the seasons, day and night, black and white—these are battles" that have their "continuation within us" (236). This dramatic discovery of meaning and form is in itself remarkable; yet in another sense, *Die andere Seite* can be seen as a maturation of ideas with which Kubin had been working for several years. It was as if time momentarily stopped to allow his personal and intellectual experiences to converge. Chance, too, played its part, but chance provided only the external stimulant to bring forth concepts and images that were part of Kubin's inner psyche. It was perhaps in the working out of the eleven illustrations for Gustav Meyrink's partially completed novel, *Der Golem*, in 1908, that led him to search more

deeply into the enigma of the creative process; however, it is an oversimplification of Kubin's development as an artist to signify this one point as of prime importance. His autobiographical writings make explicit his stylistic and technical experimentation with means to convey his concepts. His childhood preoccupation with the grotesque, his early development of a personal cosmology, his enchantment with Max Klinger's art during his Munich years, his study of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, and his attraction to the writings of Edgar Allan Poe, Gérard de Nerval, and E. T. A. Hoffmann, along with Meyrink, all contributed to the culmination of ideas that underlie *Die andere Seite*.

His art is rife with influence; yet the problem of influence is more complicated than a comparative study of Kubin and any other artist might suggest. The artists Kubin cites as influential on his own work were often influenced by each other and the path to influence is consequently more labyrinthian than it at first appears. There is no way to establish an irrefutable link between Kubin's work and that of any one particular predecessor. To grasp the manifold subtleties and nuances in the reception and transmission of concepts from one artist to another requires an understanding of each artist on his own merit and an awareness of the way that artist was perceived by the later receiver and transmitter of his work. The problem of influence is further muddled by the intellectual climate of the turn of the century. Kubin was a part of and apart from the world he lived in. Although he withdrew from the pressures of urban life to lead a somewhat hermit-like existence at Zwickledt, he could not escape the dissonance and change that affected every aspect of civilized living in the early years of the twentieth century. Kubin was caught in a world of transition, and his art and his thought were influenced as much by the energy of that world as they were by any one artist or philosopher. The following comments address, but in no way exhaust, two major influences on Kubin's art.

In the realm of ideas, the most direct influence on Kubin was Friedrich Nietzsche. Although it is impossible to state categorically which of Nietzsche's writings most profoundly influenced Kubin, it is clear from Kubin's autobiography that he was attracted to Nietzsche throughout much of his life. He assimilated and interpreted Nietzschean thought to gain insight into his own creative energy. In Munich, he read all of the Nietzsche he could find; and Nietzsche, along with Schopenhauer, led him through a maze of personal frustrations to the formulation of his first attempt to bring order to the world of experience. Although Kubin's cosmology was not clearly

worked out during his years in Munich, his division of the cosmos into the eternal Father principle (the omnipotent creator) and the Son (created as the Father's mirror image, subjected to the Father's torment and persecution and linked inseparably to the world) echoes the philosophy of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. Both philosophers, regardless of their many differences, share a perception of the world as a battleground between reason and emotion. It is this conflict between vying principles that Kubin developed in his early cosmology, and it is this conflict that Kubin eventually resolved in *Die andere Seite*. In spite of general accolades for Nietzsche as the one who provided him with a "point of view that would hold good for every conceivable life experience," nowhere does Kubin comment extensively upon his understanding of Nietzsche's writings. Regardless of that fact, there is a relationship between Nietzschean concepts and Kubin's interpretations of them. Kubin perceived the Apollonian and Dionysian as two distinct tendencies that run parallel to each other in nature, are openly at variance with each other, and are only reconciled by the artist who realizes the power, the beauty, and the necessity of both. The artist's role is to function as a mediator between them. It is he who, through his acknowledgement of both impulses, is able to express symbolically the union of the Apollonian and the Dionysian.

At the time of writing *Die andere Seite*, Kubin was apparently moving toward Nietzsche's concept of art as he understood it. He pursued a form to synthesize the static and dynamic, and simultaneously encompass dream and reality. The task that he set for himself was impossible to achieve; yet in *Die andere Seite*, he fused subconscious imagery with a basically rational attitude toward life. In the novel Patera and Bell represent the polar forces of imagination and reality, and these forces interact in order to reveal the nature of the creative process. The creative process is dialectical and is brought about by a synthesis of antitheses. According to Nietzsche in *Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geiste der Musik* (*The Birth of Tragedy* 967), "Apollo could not live without Dionysus"; and in *Die andere Seite*, Patera, the embodiment of imagination, and Bell, the personification of vitality, are perceived as mirrored images, constantly in conflict, yet inseparable and mutually dependent. Although in *Die andere Seite*, the Dream Kingdom is ultimately destroyed by the conflict between these opposites, it is out of this destruction that arises the narrator's awareness of the reliance of his own creative energy upon a synthesis of the static state of Patera's subconscious and the dynamic force of Bell's conscious will. He realizes that this ideal synthetic state can only be

temporary. A constant oscillation exists between the two forces: the strength of the one being proportionate to the weakness of the other. Yet, just as Patera and Bell are finally one, so too does the artist-protagonist realize that the dream and reality must be mystically combined in the act of creativity. The two states must be momentarily brought into conjunction, and their mutual opposition neutralized.

In his 1931 essay, *Fragment eines Weltbildes* (*Fragment of a World View*), Kubin theorized that elemental man consists of both chaos and the self. Born into chaos, self, through exercise of the imagination, forms life. However, Kubin maintains that since life is an irreality, it is eaten away again by chaos and is destroyed. The entire tension of *Die andere Seite* can be interpreted as a journey of the self into the realm of chaos. Here the fundamental forces of dream and reality struggle for domination, and in the mind of the artist-protagonist are eventually perceived as unified. His insight into the true nature of being leads him to the final proclamation of the novel that "the demiurge is a hybrid." The meaning of this concluding statement is elaborated upon in Kubin's 1920 foreword to Friedrich Huch's *Neue Träume*. In that introductory essay, he wrote, "The true creator can be nothing else than that part of us which experiences dreams and reality with equal force, in a word it is nothing but our most essential self."

Although the central idea of *Die andere Seite* is related to Kubin's understanding of Nietzsche's philosophical tenets, Nietzsche was but one influence on Kubin's thought prior to his writing the novel. In his autobiography, he openly admits his indebtedness to the graphics of Goya, Klinger, Ensor, Redon, and Brueghel. Of all these artists, it is perhaps Max Klinger, the turn-of-the-century artist and theoretician, whose works specifically helped him attain his own level of expression in *Die andere Seite*. In Klinger, Kubin discovered an artist who created images that combined optically experienced reality with imagined symbolic reality. Even though the influence of Klinger is more readily apparent in Kubin's visual art than it is in the novel, Klinger's aesthetic theory is basically the one adopted by Kubin the novelist, and is the one accepted by the narrator of *Die andere Seite*. Kubin had never been satisfied with mere representational art, and he wished to combine elements from his imagination and from reality in order to force the spectator to make meaningful connections among the figures, actions, and settings he portrayed. Klinger provided him with a model and an aesthetic principle. In his 1895 essay, *Malerei und Zeichnung* (*Painting and Drawing*), Klinger sharply distinguished between the expressive character of painting and of graphic

art. Painting, according to him, is suited to reproduce something seen; graphic art to illustrate something thought. Klinger's concept revealed to Kubin the possibility of depicting ideas—and not mere form—through the medium of drawing. This rather simply stated concept became one of Kubin's prime motives for composing *Die andere Seite*. Through writing the novel, Kubin discovered a technical means to express in drawings the visions of the subconscious mind. The interrelationship of the text and its illustrations resulted in a fusion of the two aspects of idea and form, and nullified the false distinction between the inner world of the mind and the outer world of empirical phenomena.

It was through his understanding of Nietzsche's philosophy and Klinger's aesthetics that Kubin found sanction to explore dreams. He had always been drawn to the world's mysteries rather than its tangible realities, and he now felt free to abandon the limited world of pure observation in order to elucidate the invisible world of the subconscious mind. He knew that this world would not be subjected to the laws of logic, and he was certain that this same world contained truths usually repressed by deductive reasoning. Step by step, he turned inward towards an invisible world that lay beyond the boundaries of the intellect. In some ways, his art and thought paralleled that of his contemporaries Proust and Freud, but unlike these men, he did not wish either to impose a rational structure upon the subconscious mind or to dissipate its complexities. He sought rather to choose from among the riches of the subconscious and to probe the vast regions of its vagaries. His writing of *Die andere Seite* was in one way an attempt to reveal hidden layers of life's meaning through a symbolic exploration of the mind. Like the Surrealists who followed him, he turned to dreams and reveled in their inconsistencies and lack of causality. He saw in dreams a free and uninhibited mode of thought that symbolically conveyed basic truths about man's nature.

In many ways, *Die andere Seite* has remained "a maize of splendid uncanniness"; yet, there is no doubt that from the vantage point of the century's end rather than its beginning, we, more than Kubin's contemporaries, can accept the shrinking of distance between the imagined and demonstrable aspects of existence. Certainly the discoveries of Freud and Jung, coupled with the technological advances of this century, have made us aware of the complexities of the human mind and the fragility of the human psyche. The tension of *Die andere Seite* was built upon these facts at a time when they were neither so widely known nor accepted. In *Die andere Seite*, Kubin succeeded in challenging the real possibilities of existence and in creating a novel

in which time and art became congruent.

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